



EL PASO COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT

April 29, 2008

The Honorable Ciro Rodriguez
2458 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Veterans Health Care Study

Dear Congressman Rodriguez:

Thank you for your leadership on issues of importance to the nearly 60,000 veterans in our region. From your position on the House Veterans Affairs Committee, you have led efforts to reduce the 400,000 claims backlog of veterans waiting for disability and other benefits by adding more than 1,100 new claims processors and supported critical maintenance of Veterans Affairs health care facilities. Our community has greatly benefited from your advocacy.

We are seeking your assistance as we try to ensure that our local veterans receive access to high quality health care. As you are well aware, a Department of Veterans Affairs internal study on performance standards and health care delivery ranked the El Paso VA clinic among the worst in the nation. Our local veterans experience long wait times or even worse avoid the delays at the clinic and forgo care altogether. It is clear that we must do more for our veterans.

The El Paso County Commissioners request that you contact Secretary Peake and formally request an independent study to assess the needs in El Paso and to suggest ways to improve access to high quality health care. The previous assessment conducted by the VA is outdated. As a result of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure decision, the overseas rebasing initiative, and the Army's Grow the Force plan, the troop population at Fort Bliss will more than quadruple. By 2012, there will be over 40,000 soldiers in the El Paso region and the number of military members, dependents and civilian employees at Fort Bliss will approach 100,000. An updated assessment of the needs of the veterans in our region is urgently needed.

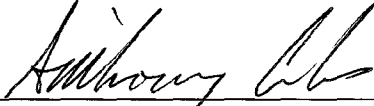
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Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your commitment to our nation's veterans. We look forward to working with you and ensuring that the veterans in El Paso receive the highest quality of health care possible. Please do not hesitate to call on us if we can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,



Anthony Cobos
County Judge



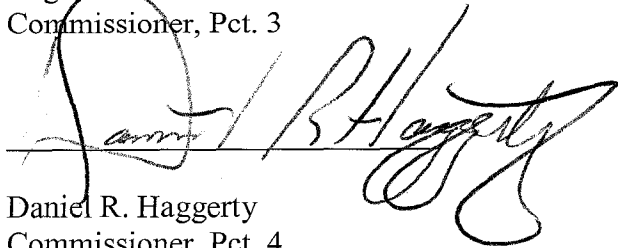
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Commissioner, Pct. 1



Veronica Escobar
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Miguel A. Teran
Commissioner, Pct. 3



Daniel R. Haggerty
Commissioner, Pct. 4